



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Council Members Yungmann, Jung and Walsh Advance Amendments to the FY21 Capital and Operating Budgets**

*Ellicott City, MD (May 20, 2020)* – Howard County Council Members David Yungmann, Deb Jung and Liz Walsh today jointly pre-filed amendments to the County Executive's proposed FY21 Capital and Operating Budgets. Reflected in these amendments to the combined \$2 billion annual County budget are savings in near-term capital costs of more than \$90 million, and in proposed operating expenses another \$21 million.

Most importantly, the budget amendments focus on preserving our current level of County services while enhancing our residents' continued health and safety. Our first responders—police and fire—remain fully funded. These front-line essential workers are heroes, and the budgeting priorities reflected in these amendments honor their service. The education budget as proposed by the County Executive also is maintained, as is the County's current workforce, ensuring continued service to our County residents during this most uncertain time.

The amendments focus on a one-year timeframe. Expecting that a fiscally responsible approach now will support a speedy economic recovery and avoid a future retraction, the amendment sponsors are certain that the most prudent course in the midst of global pandemic is to proceed most cautiously, deferring for now additional and unnecessary spending. Passage of these amendments will deliver to our County residents a fiscally responsible budget that reflects the reality of the unprecedented economic uncertainty. We must lead on fiscal responsibility and carefully evaluate spending to avoid imposing further economic strain on residents who already may be struggling.

Prior to the release of the FY21 Proposed Capital and Operating budgets, the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee (SAAC) recommended that general obligation bond authorization be lowered to \$70 million. The amendments to the budget looked in detail at the proposed projects and have offered a responsible solution to defer projects that are not deemed essential for FY21.

"Many of our taxpayers are tightening their belts right now due to economic uncertainty and a responsible government needs to do the same," said Council Member David Yungmann. "These adjustments will be framed by government spending advocates as a reduction in essential services or projects, but that is far from the truth."

“By maintaining current levels of spending, we are better positioned to address future uncertainties that may result from the current COVID-related economic downturn,” said Council Chair Deb Jung. “These amendments prioritize the health and safety of the public, as well as take into account potential impacts on the local economy. I’m thankful that my colleagues Councilmembers Walsh and Yungmann recognized our fiduciary responsibility and took collective action to address the budget in a manner that reflects these uncertain economic times.”

Council Vice Chair Liz Walsh stated, “We put health and life-safety first. We put whole-County first. Yes we will get through this—whatever this is, and whatever this becomes—together, but we must be clear-eyed and forthright about what that’s likely going to take, from all of us.”

The County Council will be holding a Work Session this coming Friday, May 22 at noon to discuss all pre-filed budget amendments. The Council will vote to approve and adopt the FY21 Capital and Operating Budgets on Wednesday, May 27 at 10am. Both meetings are open to the public and can be viewed online by visiting: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Online-Tools/Watch-Us>.

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